LEO BURNETT COMPANY, *Inc.*

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Column No. 26

TILL WE MEET AGAIN

This is the final column of my eighth year of writing for the makers of Marlboro Cigarettes, and this year, as in every preceding year, when I come to the last column of the season, I come to a problem.

My contract with the makers of Marlboro calls for me to write a *humor* column and, truly, I do the best I can—all things considered. I am not, I should explain, a jolly man by nature. Why should I be? First of all, I am shorter than everybody. Second, there are moths in my cashmere jacket. Third, I work in television.

All the same, when it comes time to write this column, I light a good Marlboro Cigarette, put aside my trauma, and try with all the strength in my tiny body to make some jokes. Sometimes it works better than others, but on the last column of the year, it just flatly doesn't work at all.

Even in the very beginning this was true—and that, you will recall, was eight years ago when I was relatively young and strong and had not yet developed that nasty knock in my transmission. Well do I remember sitting down to write the final column of my first year. Day followed barren day, and not a yock, not a boff, not a zinger did I produce. I was about to give up humor and take a job selling mechanical dogs when all of a sudden, in a blinding flash, I realized why I couldn't think of any jokes!

I leapt up from my typewriter and ran as fast as my little fat legs would carry me to the makers of Marlboro Cigarettes, and I tugged my forelock, and I said, "Sirs, I am well aware that you have engaged me to write a humor column, but today, as I approach the final column of the season, I am far too misty to be funny, for the final column of the season is, after all, a leave-taking, and when I think of saying goodbye to my audience—the swellest audience any columnist ever had—the college students of America—wonderful human beings, every man and woman of them—wise but kindly—astute but compassionate—perspicacious but forbearing—when, sirs, I think of saying goodbye to such an audience, I am too shook up even to consider levity, and so I ask you, sirs, to let me, in the final column of the year, forego humor and instead write a simple, dignified, straightforward farewell."

Then I took out my bandanna, wiped my eyes, ears, nose, and throat and waited for a reply from the makers of Marlboro.

They sat around the polished board room table, the makers, their handsome brows knit in concentration, puffing thoughtfully on the Marlboros in their tattooed hands. At length they spoke. "Yes," they said simply.

I never doubted they would say yes. People who make a cigarette as good as Marlboros must themselves be good. People who lavish such care on blending tobaccos so mild and flavorful, on devising a filter so clean and white, on boxing a flip-top box so flip-top, on packing a soft pack so soft—people like that are one hundred percent with me!

And so from that day forward, the final column of the year—including the one you are, I devoutly hope, now reading—makes no attempt to be funny, but is instead a simple thank you and au revoir.

Thank you and au revoir, makers of Marlboro. The memory of our eight years together will remain ever fresh in my heart, and I would like to state for all the world to hear that if you want me back again next year, I shall expect a substantial raise in salary.

Thank you and au revoir, college students of America. May good luck attend all your ventures. Stay well. Stay happy. Stay loose.

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Small Max has said it all. We, the makers of Marlboro Cigarettes, can only add a heartfelt second chorus: Stay well. Stay happy. Stay loose.

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